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Building a Legacy of Hope: MICHAEL RYER

Transformational Leadership at Amigos Internacionales

AMIGOS INTERNACIONALES | President | CEO

Hunger and poverty remain some of the most pressing challenges facing the world, impacting millions who lack access to essential resources, education, and opportunities. Yet, amid these hardships, a few remarkable individuals and organizations tirelessly work to make a lasting difference. **Amigos Internacionales** is one such organization, dedicated to uplifting communities, supporting vulnerable children, and building sustainable pathways to self-sufficiency for over 57 years.

At the heart of this mission stands **Michael Ryer, CEO and President** of Amigos Internacionales. Since 2009, Michael has brought over four decades of ministerial experience to the organization, demonstrating compassionate, visionary leadership. Guided by his belief that *"a single correct choice made repetitively will change the world around you,"* Michael is a leader with commitment and dedication to create a change and a better future.

Under his stewardship, Amigos has expanded its reach across 25 countries, nourishing 21,000 children daily and delivering 7.5 million meals annually to those in need. However, Michael's impact extends far beyond providing immediate aid—he focuses on sustainable community projects that enable dignity, build resilience, and promote long-term self-reliance, creating a legacy of hope and transformation across continents.

The Journey of Leading with Purpose

Michael's connection to Amigos Internacionales began early in life. Inspired by the organization's founder, Dr. John LaNoue, Michael developed a deep commitment to helping people in challenging circumstances. He joined the Amigos board 18 years ago and, a decade later, took on the role of CEO.

Michael's career began at Boyd Baptist Church in Bonham, Texas, where he served as a Music and Youth Minister. Over the years, Michael expanded his roles to include leadership in youth, music, education, and administration across North and East Texas. He also taught subjects like Old Testament studies and the History of Christianity at Navarro College and Grand Canyon University.

Michael's impact extended globally, with significant missionary work in Israel, Guam, Ukraine, and Belize. A standout initiative was his mobile kitchen project in Belize, aiming to fight hunger. His passion for service also led him to serve on nonprofit boards, addressing teen pregnancy and poverty. Michael's leadership was pivotal during the Hurricane Katrina and Rita relief efforts, further honing his crisis management skills.

As CEO of Amigos Internacionales, Michael focuses on expanding the organization's impact through community development projects that provide clean water, education, and sustainable livelihoods in Uganda. His work with Missionpoint Initiatives emphasizes education and healthcare, helping communities achieve long-term growth. Looking forward, his vision is to continue scaling Amigos Internacionales' reach, inviting others to join in making a lasting, positive difference in communities worldwide.

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Leadership that Inspires

Michael's leadership philosophy is rooted in simplicity and authenticity: lead by example, be his best self, and treat others with respect and compassion. *"I keep an open door policy,"* he says. *"Transparency and approachability are vital. I believe that leadership is more 'caught' than taught, so I strive to set an example in everything I do."* This down-to-earth approach fosters a culture of mutual respect and collaboration within Amigos Internacionales, with employees motivated by his transparency and genuine concern for each individual.

To ensure the continued growth and success of the organization, Michael emphasizes early intervention when challenges arise. This proactive approach helps maintain a harmonious work environment, allowing the team to focus wholeheartedly on their mission. His priority is to ensure that Amigos Internacionales remains operational and effective daily, emphasizing that stability is achieved through dedication and hard work. By focusing on sustainable growth, he ensures that the organization can continue to meet its objectives today while building a strong foundation for tomorrow.

Michael believes that identifying and nurturing talent is essential for organizational success. For him, this process begins by looking at individuals holistically, identifying their strengths, and working with them to improve in areas where they may need support. *"Mentorship plays a significant role in this process,"* Michael explains. *"It's about being the best version of myself and encouraging others to do the same."*

> ***"Education is one of the most powerful tools we have to create generational change,"* Michael emphasizes. *"By investing in these children's futures, we're breaking the cycle of poverty and giving them a chance to build a better life."***

History Highlights

1967	Medical and Dental Clinics on the Border
1968	Hurricane Beulah
1969	Mobile clinic from Bus
1970	Tornados in Lubbock
1972	First Mobile Disaster Unit built
1974	Disaster Unit sent to Honduras
1985	Earthquake in Mexico City
1990	Built Airlift Kitchen
1991	Relief efforts for Kurds in Iran
1997	Corn Distribution in North Korea
2001	Cleaning Apartments at Ground Zero- New York
2004	Bam Earthquake in Iran
2005	Cleaning Wells in Sri Lanka after Tsunami
2011	Tsunami - Japan organizing Disaster Aid
2012-19	Various vehicles provided to other Non-Profits
2016	Mobile Kitchen to Belize
2011-22	7.5 million meals a year to Guatemala - Water wells in Uganda
2019	Orphan-led children groups sponsored in schools
2020	Purchased Betty and Ed Ryer Open Hands Academy in Gulu
2021	Orphanage to rescue sex-trafficked children

This approach has cultivated a team that is skilled and deeply committed to Amigos Internacionales' mission. Michael's dedication to mentorship and development has enabled the organization to build a resilient workforce, empowering local leaders who are well-equipped to drive change within their communities.

Building a Legacy of Hope and Resilience

Amigos Internacionales has a rich history of providing disaster relief and humanitarian aid. The organization began by offering medical and dental clinics in the Rio Grande Valley, along the Texas-Mexico border, which eventually led to its establishment as "Amigos Internacionales"—a name that embodies its mission to be international friends to those in need. Over the years, Amigos has expanded its reach, offering food, shelter, and other essentials to communities devastated by natural and man-made disasters.

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One of the organization's most impactful projects is its work in Northern Uganda, where Amigos Internacionales has developed a comprehensive program to build sustainable communities. *"Our efforts in Northern Uganda include drilling clean water wells, building schools, and creating churches,"* Michael explains. *"These initiatives provide stability and hope, transforming lives by addressing fundamental needs."*

The organization also offers life skills classes, teaching mothers skills like sewing and soap-making while introducing goat-raising initiatives to local villagers. A demonstration farm provides training in sustainable agriculture, helping alleviate food insecurity and equipping families with tools for self-sufficiency.

Technology plays a critical role in Amigos Internacionales' mission, enhancing its ability to connect with donors and share impactful stories. Each sponsorship includes a personalized video from the sponsored student, creating a direct link between donor and recipient. *"Technology has enabled us to create a more personal experience for our donors,"* Michael says. *"It also simplifies the donation process, making it easy for people to give and support our cause."*

By embracing digital communication tools, Amigos Internacionales can expand its reach and improve donor relationships, allowing supporters to witness the direct impact of their contributions on the lives of those they support.

A Unique Approach to Community Empowerment

Michael and his team make a conscious effort to employ local talent and resources within the countries they serve. This ensures that projects are culturally relevant and empowers local communities to take ownership of their development. *"Our Ugandan team knows more than we do about the needs of their people,"* Michael points out. "We work diligently to keep Ugandans Ugandan, respecting their culture and values rather than imposing our own."

This respect for cultural integrity sets Amigos Internacionales apart from traditional nonprofit work models. Michael has created a sustainable model that fosters genuine, lasting change within communities by building strong, respectful partnerships.

A New Chapter of Growth and Innovation

One of the organization's most recent achievements is establishing a new school in Burpong Village, Uganda, where local leaders donated 16 acres of land to Amigos Internacionales. A new water well was drilled, and the Dila Baptist Church was founded to support the community. However, during a visit, Michael discovered a troubling reality: over 350 children in the area had no access to a school within a reasonable distance.

Moved by this discovery, Michael spearheaded a fundraising campaign, raising over $100,000 in just five weeks to construct a school. The first phase of the building, set to open in January 2025, will provide education to 160 children, with hopes to raise the remaining funds to accommodate all children in the village. *"Education is one of the most powerful tools we have to create generational change,"* Michael emphasizes. *"By investing in these children's futures, we're breaking the cycle of poverty and giving them a chance to build a better life."*

Guided by Faith and Service

Michael attributes the organization's long-standing success to its guiding principles, rooted in the belief in giving selflessly. "Our philosophy comes from a scripture that encourages us to keep gifts in our hands, ready to give to others," he explains.

For Michael, Amigos Internacionales' mission is a calling that goes beyond mere charity. His work is driven by a profound desire to uplift those in need and to create pathways for them to realize their potential. This commitment has allowed Amigos Internacionales to remain a vital force in humanitarian aid, demonstrating that leadership in nonprofit administration is about compassion, integrity, and resilience.

Looking ahead, Michael envisions expanding the MissionPoint initiative in Uganda, working with local leaders to establish 25 new sites for community development. By building sustainable infrastructure and nurturing educational opportunities, he aims to create lasting change that will continue to impact generations.

Through Michael's transformative leadership, Amigos Internacionales is not only meeting immediate needs but also providing hope for a better, more equitable world.

AMIGOS INTERNACIONALES